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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 001031

DEPT FOR AF/E - WALSHMP AND AF/S - MARBURGJR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2019

TAGS: MOPS PREL PTER EAID ER SO SF

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE DELIVERED: URGENT NEED TO PROMOTE SOMALIA CEASEFIRE, SUPPORT SOMALIA TFG, AND PRESSURE ERITREA TO STOP SUPPORTING EXTREMISTS

REF: STATE 50007

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond L. Brown. Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Poloff delivered reftel points on Somalia and Eritrea to Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRC) Deputy Director Phindile Xaba on May 20, 2009. Xaba acknowledged that Eritrea's public actions, including not recognizing Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG), pointed to possible collusion with the enemies of the TFG, but she wondered whether the accusations of Eritrea providing weapons to insurgents were true. She explained that DIRC officials were waiting for instructions from their new Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane on foreign policy issues across the board, although she expects no major changes. The South African Government (SAG) is planning to provide capacity building to the TFG. End summary.

¶2. (C) In the view of DIRC Horn of Africa and Indian Ocean Islands Deputy Director Phindile Xaba, the conflict in Mogadishu is not between Islamic extremists and the TFG. Rather, it is a personal conflict between Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys and Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. She commented that when she met Aweys last year in Asmara, he looked very comfortable and it appeared that the Eritreans were taking good care of him. She thought it made sense that the Eritreans had provided supplies to Aweys forces, but she asked whether anyone had verified these reports.

¶3. (C) Xaba worries that Sharif's government won't last past June 2009. She lamented that, "The international community, including ourselves, is just watching. The African Union and UN representatives have just made noise about foreign fighters." According to Xaba, South Africa is planning to support the TFG with capacity building in the key government departments and institutions, although none has been selected yet. (Note: South Africa was asked to provide police force training, but the SAG declined because the SAG does not have police available to provide training, according to Xaba. End note.) She explained that while planning for capacity building continues, there has generally been a pause in foreign policy activities due to the transition in the new SAG administration. She said, "The new Zuma administration has said there will be no major changes (in foreign policy), but we're waiting to see if there will be a change in emphasis."

¶4. (C) Xaba acknowledged the threat posed to the region if the insurgents succeeded in toppling the TFG. She mentioned al-Shabab leader Abu Mansoor's December 19, 2008 Islamist pronouncement that, "We will establish Islamic rule from Alaska and Chile to South Africa, Japan, Russia, the Solomon Islands and all the way to Iceland, be warned, we are coming." She believes al-Shabab may target South Africa because of incidences of violence against Somalis in South Africa even before the eruption of xenophobic attacks of May 2008. According to Xaba, Somalis own many businesses in the

Cape Town area and have formed strong associations in Johannesburg. She went on to say that a leader of one of the Johannesburg association of Somalis admitted that Somalis have not integrated well into South African society, but keep to themselves.

15. (C) Comment: Analysts, government officials, and Zuma insiders agree that there will be no major foreign policy changes in South Africa and that focus will turn to domestic issues. The previous Mbeki administration never found a formula for SAG intervention in Somalia, even though he described it as appositive obligation in terms of African solidarity. Observers think the current SAG government will be less "aggressively internationalist" than Mbeki in its approach to governing and foreign policy, which may result in South Africa remaining aloof or only nominally engaged with other African states on Somalia. It is therefore unlikely that South Africa will go forward with high level engagement to respond to the current violence in Mogadishu at least until the new minister, Nkoana-Mashabane, has settled into her position and assembled her team. End comment.

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